

From: Adrian Byng-Clarke
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/11/01 12:28pm
Subject: DOJ/Microsoft Antitrust Settlement

I believe that Microsoft should be more severely sanctioned for its anti-competitive behavior. It is important at this time to make sure that this behavior does not continue. Perhaps the most effective way is to have Microsoft release the source code for its Operating Systems (or at least the main core of them). Microsoft has imposed itself on 95% of the desktop systems. However it has done so through an unfair advantage: its monopolistic network. Releasing operating system will help to restore the competitive balance to the market.

I am a computer programmer and web designer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I should make it clear that the views that are presented here are strictly my own and necessary those of MIT.

I believe that Microsoft should be more severely sanctioned for its anti-competitive behavior. It is important at this time to make sure that this behavior does not continue. Perhaps the most effective way is to have Microsoft release the source code for its Operating Systems (or at least the main core of them). Microsoft has imposed itself on 95% of the desktop systems. However it has done so through an unfair advantage: its monopolistic network. Releasing operating system will help to restore the competitive balance to the market.

Releasing the source code to the public will open the market in a couple of ways. First off, it will ensure that software manufacturers are on equal footing with Microsoft. Because 3rd party software manufacturers aren't privy to the inner workings of the MS operating systems, they are less able to compete with the Microsoft programmers. This should not be allowed to continue. Opening the Operating System Source will nullify Microsoft's advantage for developing software to run on its own operating system. Microsoft's software will have to compete based on its functionality and performance, not on the fact that its programmers get insider information.

Releasing the source code to the public (vs. just to computer manufacturers) will also help to restore competition to the operating system market. At this point it is very difficult for an emerging operating system to be successful due to Microsoft's strangle hold on the OS market. This is because most software is built around Microsoft Windows. Operating systems can only be as popular as the software that they support. If one releases a great operating system- it might just disappear because there is no word processor or spreadsheet for it. However, with the Windows source code open, operating systems will be

better able to emulate Windows and thus run windows software. To continue to succeed (or dominate), Microsoft will have to prove itself by the quality of its products and service; not just its universality. Operating system competition can only benefit consumers with better products at more competitive prices.

Microsoft should also be prohibited from leveraging hardware manufacturers and computer retailers for a certain amount of time (5 years at least). As a preventative measure, I believe that Microsoft should be prohibited from penalizing companies that don't bundle their computers with Microsoft software, particularly Windows. This should further open up competition in the OS/PC market.

Although most of the debate has revolved around Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office should also be addressed. I believe that this is an excellent product that has universal appeal. However Microsoft has historically used this product to unnaturally control the market. Word and Outlook use formats that are inherently proprietary so as to prevent users from migrating or using other products. Microsoft has consciously stayed away from proven, open and universal standards that foster the easy transfer of information. Instead they have relied on proprietary/closed formats to maintain their dominance.

I submit that Microsoft has intentionally made it difficult for other programs to open word documents or for people to transfer other document formats (such as Star Office). This kind of sabotage, known as "Breakware", should be illegal. Right now Office persists as a standard because it is the only set of programs that can open much of the knowledge as it is stored in Microsoft formats. This bothers me because it implies that much of my work, done in Microsoft Word for example doesn't exclusively belong to me. The files have a Microsoft cachet that I am forbidden from breaking. If Microsoft were to stop making Office for later versions of its operating system, I might be unable to open my files. Information should be kept in open formats to foster knowledge transfer and persistence. Program choice should be left up to the user. Office is an excellent product. Surely its functionality can be separated from the way in which it stores information. Microsoft should be given 2 choices. Either they should adhere to existing open standards, or the document storage formats they use should be opened up.

This letter simply wouldn't be complete without addressing Internet Explorer. Clearly Microsoft has destroyed the browser market by "giving away" internet explorer. However, there is no version of this for Linux operating systems for example. I believe that MS browser dominance can be addressed in the same way as the other areas: OPEN THE SOURCE CODE. It's free anyway - why not make the code freely available. This should again nullify Microsoft's unnatural advantage.

It is important for us to create a fair playing field for the computer industry. This has been one of the most dynamic sectors of our economy for the past decade. However, I believe that Microsoft's advantage has promoted mediocre products. If we intend to remain competitive with emerging markets, we need to make sure that our products can stand on there own. Open the source code. American ingenuity will make up the difference.

Adrian